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Budget proposal's impact on the valley

The Desert Sun
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MEDI-CAL, 'WORKFARE'

- **Governor's proposal:** Medi-Cal will be cut by \$900 million under the governor's budget plan. The state's program to bring welfare recipients into the workforce is targeted for an \$800 million cut.
- **What's at stake:** "It's a crisis," said Helene Beilman, executive vice president of Vantage Medical Group, the largest provider of managed care Medi-Cal services in the state.
- **Impact on the valley:** In the Coachella Valley alone, Vantage Medical Group is contracted with 55 primary care physicians and about 200 specialists to provide health care to 30,000 Medi-Cal and Healthy Family enrollees. Specialists and primary care physicians are threatening to resign their contracts with Vantage, which will seriously jeopardize access to medical services for lower income residents, Beilman said. "We are going to go back to Medi-Cal patients getting their care from emergency rooms," she said. "It's horrible."

HIGHER EDUCATION

- **Governor's proposal: College of the Desert:** An \$8-per-unit tuition increase. Cuts in programs, if any, would be enacted by the school. **California State University-San Bernardino/Palm Desert Campus:** Tuition hike of 10 percent for undergraduates and 40 percent for graduate students.
- **Current fiscal year: COD:** Spring semester tuition per unit is \$18 for in-state students, \$167 for out-of-state/U.S. and \$182 for foreign students. COD's budget for the 2003-04 school year is about \$30 million, some \$200,000 less than the year before. **CSU-SB/PDC:** Annual tuition for a fulltime student is \$2,572 for an undergraduate and \$2,782 for a graduate student. School overall budget figures not available.
- **What's at stake: COD:** Chief business officer Jack Randall released a statement through the school public affairs office indicating the league of community colleges should provide details of the proposed budget's impact on members early next week.
- **Impact on the valley: COD:** A tuition increase almost certainly would impact enrollment, which was about 9,800 (full-time and part-time students) for the fall semester. An enrollment decrease would reduce school revenues, resulting in possible program cuts for the 2004-05 school year. **CSU-SB/PDC:** Facilities expansion has helped enrollment increase to more than 1,200. A 10 percent tuition bump to \$2,776 for a full-time undergraduate could impact that.

LOCAL EDUCATION

- **Governor's proposal:** Kindergarten-12 schools in the valley still would receive the minimum funding due them under Proposition 98, with no more cuts through the June 30 close of this fiscal year.

- **Current fiscal year:** Palm Springs Unified, one of the valley's three school districts, is operating with a \$140 million budget this school year. District superintendent Dr. Michael Sellwood termed the lack of midyear budget cuts a positive.
- **What's at stake:** Sellwood also cited Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's commitment to maintain the structure of Proposition 98 and an eventual restoration to the original funding level of that legislation as positives. A conference Tuesday in Long Beach is expected to detail school-related aspects of the proposed budget.
- **Impact on the valley:** Officials of the Desert Sands Unified and Coachella Valley Unified districts could not be reached for comment. Of his district, Sellwood said: "The state has not backfilled losses from past years and we are facing a shortfall this year. We're probably facing cuts of \$3.5 to \$4 million (for the next school year). It would be very speculative as to where cuts would be."

INDIAN GAMING

- **Governor's proposal:** Increase revenue sharing from tribal casinos by \$500 million.
- **Current year:** \$140 million
- **Coming year:** \$640 million
- **What's at stake:** The tribes say the governor's proposal will make California gaming less competitive because the revenue target is tied to the amounts that the state of Connecticut extracts from two casinos that have no competition in a market area that includes New York City and its suburbs.
- **Impact on the valley:** More money funneled to the state from the tribes means less to be spent locally. If the governor shoots too high, tribes may delay expansions and reduce contributions to local charities. "It's disappointing that they didn't sit down and talk to us before they gave us a number," said Maurice Lyons, chairman of the Morongo Band of Mission Indians.

TRANSPORTATION

- **Governor's proposal:** \$1.1 billion cut (\$1.1 billion increase when 'other' road and transit money added)
- **What's at stake:** Experts say nearly one-third of the governor's spending reductions this fiscal year are proposed to come from transportation. In Southern California, the reductions would have serious consequences on traffic congestion, goods movement, air quality, economic development and quality of life, according to the Southern California Association of Governments. The group says the cuts could eventually disqualify the region for \$8 billion in federal air quality matching funds.
- **Impact on the valley:** A county-wide half-cent sales tax has helped to create a funding pool to pay for existing transportation projects, such as expansion of several Interstate 10 interchanges, currently approved in the valley. However, a shortfall in state funding would mean less funding for other road projects, said Allyn Waggle, deputy director of the Coachella Valley Association of Governments.

Rick Davis, Jim Sams, Kim Trone, Jake Henshaw, wire services

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